

## SANDAG Community-Based Outreach Program for the Regional Transportation Plan

Final Report: South Bay Community Services (SBCS)

Reporting Period: October 1-November 30, 2006

South Bay Community Services (SBCS) used \$6,700 provided by SANDAG to coordinate and facilitate five public meetings for the SANDAG Community-Based Outreach Program for the Regional Transportation Plan. Expenses include general supplies used for promotion purposes, travel costs, staff costs, incentives and refreshments. Gift cards were purchased and given to all participants as an incentive for them to attend and provide feedback. Childcare was provided at four of the five meetings, which were attended by families living at the agency's affordable housing and by low-income single parents. In addition, snacks and refreshments were offered during all meetings. (Please refer to the invoice provided for further details).

The benefits gained by facilitating the five public meetings include receiving valuable feedback on San Diego's transportation system from low-income communities in the South Bay that are most likely to regularly use public transportation, including low-income families (seniors, adults, and youth) living in SBCS' affordable housing units, and residents of low-income, minority communities. These transit dependent families and individuals shared their transportation needs to access jobs, schools, employment and services. The public meetings also provided participants the opportunity to learn about SANDAG's services, important transportation issues, and about opportunities to become involved in other RTP activities such as subregional workshops, public hearings and other activities.

Five public meetings were facilitated in the South Bay with a total of 142 participants (please refer to attached sign in sheets). Two meetings were bilingual (English/Spanish) and were held at SBCS' affordable housing units, two meetings were facilitated in Spanish during adult ESL classes, and one meeting was held in English at a senior recreational center. Participants included seniors, families, single parents, and youth 14-18 years of age; the majority of participants were low-income.

All public meetings provided a general introductory presentation that covered SANDAG's role, SANDAG's Mobility 2030 Goals, and current as well as future transportation related projects. The general introductory presentation was followed by a group discussion where participants provided feedback on the following key questions:

1. How can we improve the San Diego transportation system?
2. With limited dollars, what are the biggest priorities for the transportation system?
3. How should we better connect the transportation system with jobs and housing?
4. Are there other funding options we should consider?
5. What other feedback would you give to decision-makers?

Participants had the opportunity to write their responses down on a piece of paper and then share their ideas with the group.

Responses and feedback have been synthesized as follows:

1. How can we improve the San Diego transportation system?

Ideas for improvement fall under three categories: trolley and bus services, roads/freeways, and other. Participants think trolley and bus services can be improved by lowering fares, which will make public transportation affordable and more appealing for people who currently don't use it. They feel additional routes and stops are needed and trolleys/buses should run more frequently. This idea can be accomplished by creating routes serviced by small buses or taxis that go into small streets in residential areas and by regular larger buses that only run through main streets and commercial areas. Two different types of routes can be designed: regular routes for short commutes and non-stop fast routes for longer commutes. The different types of transportation systems (i.e. buses, trolley etc.) need to coordinate their schedules in order to decrease waiting time when passengers transfer from trolley to bus. The trolley system also needs to be expanded or a light rail/underground metro system should to be developed in order to connect the South Bay with Central San Diego and the North County region.

In regards to roads and freeways, additional fast track lanes (toll roads) should be created in segments of the freeways that are highly congested during rush hour so drivers can choose to pay to get to work quicker. Another option is to create fast lanes (with few exits) on the freeways for long commutes. For example, a significant number of the people live in the South Bay and commute to the North County region and could potentially make good use of a fast lane that takes them directly to their place of employment in the North County region. Additional HOV lanes, designated bus lanes, and truck lanes are also needed on the freeways. As more housing and communities are built further east, additional freeways need to be built in those areas as well.

Other ideas include, making more use of taxis, perhaps by making them part of the public transportation system. They can increase the number of routes and stops and make it more convenient for the public to use public transportation. Alternative school and work schedules should also be encouraged to decrease the number of vehicles during rush hour. A reliable and well-developed carpooling network should be developed in order to increase the number of people carpooling to work and school. Incentives can also be provided to companies that offer a shuttle service in areas that have a significant number of employees. Lastly, youth groups think it is a good idea to have public schools provide a shuttle service to students at a minimal cost in order to decrease traffic and congestion near and around public schools.

2. With limited dollars, what are the biggest priorities for the transportation system?

With limited dollars, participants feel the biggest priorities are safety and public transportation improvements. As population continues to grow, many feel there isn't any land left to add regular lanes on the freeway system. Therefore, funds should be allocated to expand and develop an efficient public transportation system that is reliable, accessible and affordable to all. In addition, participants think safety needs to be addressed in order to make streets, trolley/bus stops and transit centers safe, which will encourage more people to walk and use public transportation at all times of the day.

3. How should we better connect the transportation system with jobs and housing?

Participants think that in order to better connect the transportation system with jobs and housing, all new communities should be built to accommodate a mixture of homes jobs, shops, and services next to each other. One particular group used the Eastlake community in the South Bay

as an example of poor planning (with homes, shops, and services being completely segregated and far from each other), which forces residents to completely depend on their cars. Many would appreciate having the option to walk/bike to work, school, shops, and services. In addition, several groups stressed the importance of having employment centers all throughout the county and not just in certain areas, such as the North County region. Good paying jobs need to be drawn to the South Bay and East County areas to significantly reduce traffic going north on the I-805 and I-5 in the mornings and traffic going south on the I-805 and I-5 in the evenings. If employers cannot be drawn to the South Bay or East County areas, then a Coaster or a heavy rail system needs to be developed to transport commuters from the South Bay and East County regions to Central San Diego and the North County region.

4. Are there other funding options we should consider?

Participants came up with a variety of funding options to help pay for transportation in San Diego. Participants think that if transportation becomes cheaper, more people will use public transportation, which will generate enough revenue to pay for it self and even generate some profit. Additional toll roads at affordable prices may also generate enough money to pay for the construction of that particular toll road and hopefully generate revenue. Rather than having one or two expensive toll roads it would be more appropriate to develop multiple inexpensive toll roads. In addition, toll roads can be installed at the end of each County, where drivers can pay a minimal fee to drive through each County. Lastly, big box retailers and large companies should provide free shuttle services to surrounding areas; the burden would then be shared between the private and the public sector.

5. What other feedback would you give to decision-makers?

Many participants feel that low-income people are more likely to use public transit, so employers and governmental agencies need to come up with programs and incentives to get middle and upper class individuals to also use public transportation, HOV lanes, bicycles, etc. In addition, it is necessary for planners and decision makers to look at how other countries (both developed and undeveloped) deal with their transportation system issues and should also not dismiss nontraditional informal transportation options.

In summary, five public meetings were held in English and/or Spanish and were attended by seniors, adults, families, single parents, and youth living in the South Bay; the majority were low-income individuals. Everyone expressed a concern towards San Diego's expected population growth and future transportation issues. Many expressed their frustration with the current transportation system and all shared their ideas on how to improve it, their top priorities, how to better connect the transportation system with jobs and housing, and transportation funding options. The general consensus is that although driving alone is much more comfortable and convenient, traffic and congestion are getting worse, which means that other alternatives need to be considered by decision makers as well as by the public.